

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A surface-modified base matrix, comprising a porous polymeric base matrix onto which branched hydrophilic polyhydroxy-functional polymers have been covalently attached, wherein the branched polyhydroxy-functional polymers ~~having~~ have a degree of branching (DB) of at least 0.2 and further wherein each branched polyhydroxy-functional polymer has been ~~tethered~~ attached covalently to the base matrix at two or more points.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 1, wherein the polymeric base matrix present a hydrophilic polyhydroxy-functional pore surface.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 1, wherein the polymeric base matrix includes a cross-linked carbohydrate material.

Claim 4 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 1, wherein the polymeric base matrix is comprised of one or more synthetic polymers.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 1, wherein the degree of branching of the branched polyhydroxy-functional polymers is at least about 0.4.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 1, wherein the branched hydrophilic polymer is a copolymer comprising a polyhydroxy-functional monomer cross-linked with an epoxide.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 6, wherein the epoxide is epichlorohydrin.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The matrix of ~~claim 1~~ claim 6, wherein the polyhydroxy-functional monomer is a polyol.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 8, wherein the polyol is a sugar or a sugar alcohol.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 9, wherein the polyhydroxy-functional monomer is selected from the group consisting of sucrose, glucose, sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 10, wherein the polyhydroxy-functional monomer is sucrose.

Claim 12 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 1, which has been derivatised into a chromatographic matrix by attachment of functional groups to one or more of the hydroxy groups of the branched polyhydroxy-functional polymer.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 12, which is an ion-exchanger, and wherein said functional groups are charged groups adapted to binding substances having an opposite charge.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 13, which has been derivatised into a cation-exchanger by attachment of sulfopropyl groups to one or more of the hydroxy groups of the branched polyhydroxy-functional polymer.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 13, which has been derivatised into an anion-exchanger by attachment of quaternary amino groups to one or more of the hydroxy groups of the branched polyhydroxy-functional polymer.

Claim 16 (previously presented): The matrix of claim 12, wherein said functional groups are selected from the group consisting of affinity groups, hydrophobic groups and metal chelating groups.

Claim 17-29 (cancelled)